

# Town Meeting



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## What Shall We Do With the American Communist?

Moderator, GUNNAR BACK

Speakers

MORRIS ERNST

VICTOR LASKY



COMING

—April 28, 1953—

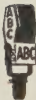
**Modern Woman: Companion or  
Competitor?**

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## What Shall We Do With the American Communist?

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The account of the meeting reported in this Bulletin was transcribed from recordings made of the actual broadcast and represents the exact content of the meeting as nearly as such mechanism permits. The publishers and printer are not responsible for the statements of the speakers or the points of views presented.

### THE SPEAKERS' COLUMN

**MORRIS ERNST**—Lawyer and author of *Report on the American Communist* and other books. A graduate of the New York Law School in 1912, Morris Ernst has been a member of the law firm of Greenbaum, Wolff & Ernst since 1915. In the course of his legal career, he has served many prominent Americans including Fiorello LaGuardia, Herbert Lehman, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Harry S. Truman. He served as arbiter for Mayor LaGuardia in the taxicab strike of 1934, and drafted legislation for Governor Lehman on insurance matters. He was a member of the New York State Banking Board by appointment of Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt. Governor Lehman appointed him to the same position from 1933-45. During the war, he was special counsel for the War Production Board, and a personal representative for President Roosevelt on various missions to England. More recently, Mr. Ernst was appointed by President Truman to his Committee on Civil Rights and Advisory Committee to the Post Office. He is author of *The First Freedom*, *The Best Is Yet*, *Too Big*, *Censor Marches On* (with A. Lindey), *The Ultimate Power*, *Hold Your Tongue* (with A. Lindey), *To the Pure* (with William Seagle), *So Far So Good*, *The People Know Best* and *American Sexual Behavior and the Kinsey Report* (with David Loth). Last year, with David Loth, he wrote *For Better or Worse*, subtitled *A New Approach to Marriage and Divorce* in addition to his *Report on the American Communist*.

**VICTOR LASKY**—Journalist and co-author of *Seeds of Treason*. Mr. Lasky has been a working newspaperman for 14 years. Since resigning from the Scripps Howard newspapers in February 1951, however, he has concentrated on magazine writing. Last year, while working on a Hollywood yarn for *Cosmopolitan*, he was signed by Dore Schary of MGM to write an original documentary film exposing Communist front techniques. Titled "The Hoaxters," it was released last month. Victor Lasky, now 34, was born in Manhattan and began his newspaper career as a copy boy for a New York paper. In 1941, he was hired as a pre-publication employee of Marshall Field's new Chicago *Sun*. After a short stint in Chicago, he was

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# What Shall We Do With the American Communist?

## Announcer:

Tonight Town Meeting is broadcasting from the high school auditorium in Orange, New Jersey, under the auspices of the Friends of the Orange Public Library. The Friends of the Library established their organization five years ago. It has now a membership of 300 people who have as their objective the promotion of public interest in the library and closely related institutions. There are 125 such groups throughout the United States. The Orange branch sends greetings to similar organizations across the country.

Orange, New Jersey, is the location of several large industries which are famous throughout the world. Among them is the Monroe Calculating Machine Company which, like other community industrial concerns, gives active support to the Friends of the Public Library. It was in nearby West Orange in 1887 that Thomas A. Edison opened his research laboratory, a small group of buildings that were to become the cradle of American industry. Now to preside as moderator for tonight's discussion, here is ABC's well-known Washington news reporter, Gunnar Back.

## Moderator Back:

Thank you very much and good evening. Tonight's Town Meeting was to have been on the subject: "Is Big Business Good or Bad?" the subject being based on David E. Lilienthal's book, *Big Business—A New Era*. We regret to announce that Mr. Lilienthal is ill and unable to be with us tonight. Although we found it necessary to change the discussion topic, we have, however, retained Mr.

Lilienthal's speaking partner, Mr. Morris L. Ernst. Morris Ernst, in collaboration with David Loth, is the author of a recent book called *Report on the American Communist*. Mr. Ernst has the idea that everybody has been talking so hard about communism that they have forgotten to *look* at the communist. Morris Ernst takes that look in his book.

Three hundred former communists told the authors why they joined, why they quit, and what the communists they knew, said, and did and believed. If Mr. Ernst startles you or runs against some accepted beliefs tonight, the reason is that no one in the long fight against the enemy, he thinks, had stopped to look him over closely. So Morris Ernst has arrived at some new ideas on what he thinks should be done about the American communist. Throughout the country, motion picture houses are now showing a documentary film called the "Hoaxters." Victor Lasky helped write this anti-communist film for MGM.

Mr. Lasky and Mr. Ernst may not come together on too much agreement tonight here in the high school auditorium in Orange, New Jersey, as they debate Town Hall's subject: "What Shall We Do With the American Communist?" but they do start with the agreement that communism must be fought at home with every weapon a strong, free, and fearless people can devise. Morris Ernst is a New York lawyer and writer, author of other books on the free American way of life. Victor Lasky was a newspaperman for 14 years before turning full-time writer. He is co-author of the book, *Seeds of Treason*.



son, an account of the Alger Hiss case. And now, first, Victor Lasky on what he thinks we should do about the American communist.

**Mr. Lasky:**

Thank you, Mr. Back. What are we to do about the communists? I think that Mr. Ernst and I are agreed that we ought to do everything we can about making communists ex-communists. Mr. Ernst and I are agreed that the Communist party is an insidious conspiracy directed by the gangsters in the Kremlin. But judging from Mr. Ernst's new book, I think that possible differences between Mr. Ernst and myself arise on *how* to make ex-communists out of communists. Now Mr. Ernst and his colleague, David Loth, have written a pretty good book. It is a pioneering work in the field of the psychopathic aspects of communism.

However, I think that Mr. Ernst has gone astray when in his conclusions he attacks the work of Congressional committees in the field of communism. The book says, in effect, that these committees have actually done little in combating communism. Now I maintain that the various Congressional committees, despite their detractors, despite some of their own blunders, have done a remarkable job in compiling an imposing record of communist intrigue in all aspects of American life. I say also that if it hadn't been for the House un-American Activities Committee Alger Hiss would today still be moving in high places.

Now what about the ex-communists? Those ex-communists who have spoken out against communism, who have assisted the United States Government in ferreting out Red traitors, are today being

smeared by self-appointed anti-communists. Let's get specific. Why is there so much sympathy for Alger Hiss, particularly in a so-called liberal academic world? Why is there so much hatred for Whitaker Chambers? Now in his new book, Mr. Ernst argues that ex-communists should be left alone. They should not be held before committees to confess past sins, Mr. Ernst argues. I happen to agree with that. But, Mr. Ernst, if these ex-communists can help pinpoint the communist menace, it seems to me that they owe that much to their country—that is to testify.

I think the hatred of ex-communists is a substitution complex. Many of the people who dislike ex-communists have been wrong, horribly wrong, on a crucial issue of our generation—the threat to our freedom from communism. They are the people who signed the petitions, who joined the fronts, and who brought the communists to the White House. Instead of facing up to their mistakes, instead of recognizing the main enemy, they want to forget the whole sorry business. So without realizing it, they perform a neat sleight-of-hand trick, and substitute the hatred of ex-communists for the hatred of communism. That's a problem, Mr. Ernst, I am afraid you failed to discuss in your otherwise excellent book.

**Mr. Back:** Thank you, Mr. Lasky. It seems that you have performed the function of a book reviewer. You're the author, Morris Ernst, so will you tell us what you think should be done about the American communist and comment on this book review? Mr. Morris L. Ernst.

**Mr. Ernst:**

I think the first thing to do

is to have an informed public. In spite of the millions spent by Congress with hearings, I dare say no one listening on the radio or in this room knows the basic facts. The facts, I think, are now undisputed, but you wouldn't get them from the Congressional committees. 700,000 Americans have gone in and out of the communist movement in America since it started in 1930. The average length of time they are in the party is about three years. The turnover is terrific. They spend a quarter of the time in the party getting out. They are mainly young people.

The boys have a terrific hostility to their fathers. And the girls usually testify that they have an overwhelming mother. There are very few good looking girls in the communist movement; these are lonely girls who want a beau. If there are two brothers in the family, one joins the communist movement and the other will be a supporter of McCarthy. This is an ordinary sibling rivalry. There are practically no poor people in the party; there are practically no workers in the party; there are now approximately 25 to 30,000 members of the party. This is an evil movement—evil particularly because there are about 3,000 hard-core professional revolutionist saboteurs. These are the people who are not mentioned or brought before Congressional committees.

Oh, to be sure we have had a Whitaker Chambers and a Bentley and a Budenz and a Hiss and maybe twenty who have admitted to espionage. But in the main this is the job of the FBI. I think what we have done is sustain the hard core of the communist movement. I am against outlawing the party because just before you outlaw it, it will change its name and it will

call itself the Abraham Lincoln peace movement. And then what are you going to do, start all over again? You can't outlaw an idea.

I have faith in the American people. I have faith in the marketplace of thought. I have faith that we can beat down evil ideas. I wouldn't outlaw the movement. What I would do is get them out. If the American Legion and the National Manufacturers Association and the Rotary clubs would organize employment bureaus and say, "Look, you made a mistake. There is no such thing in life as sinning without repentance and salvation. We'll get you jobs, get out of this evil movement. We won't give you a preference for a job and we won't give you a job in a sensitive area but we'll get you out." This is the way to destroy the general membership of the communist party instead of what we see happening before the Congressional committees. (*Applause*)

**Mr. Back:** Thank you, Mr. Ernst. Well, we have set up our platforms, I think we can go now, but before we do perhaps we had better define the Communist party in terms of some figure, some membership figure, so we know what we are talking about. What would you say, Mr. Lasky? How many communists are there in America today? We can't count them, I know, but roughly?

**Mr. Lasky:** The only estimate that I think is reliable is the estimate given by J. Edgar Hoover, and you may correct me on this, Morris. I think he said 27,000 hard-core communists, which is, incidentally, a decrease in the number of card-carrying members, but that doesn't mean it is less of a menace. I think he also said that there was a six-to-one ratio of fel-

low-travelers. Now to my mind, a fellow-traveler can at times do more harm wherever he may be than a card-carrying member. The so-called card-carrying member today is a misnomer, because we know that the party boys don't carry cards any more. We know that that's a little too dangerous.

The House un-American Activities Committee seems to have a bad habit of picking up party cards. But that, generally, is the picture. There is no other way of figuring it out. I must say that Morris Ernst's estimate of 700,000 ex-Communists is quite a figure, and it is something worth considering. I happen to go along with Morris on many of his proposals, by the way, in his new book. I don't agree with his attack on, say, the House un-American Activities Committee.

**Mr. Back:** We were agreed then that probably we're talking about 31,000 communists at this moment.

**Mr. Ernst:** That's really 30,000 of which we printed in the book. There are about 8,000 hard-core, and we've got them broken down by national origin, non-citizenship, etc.

**Mr. Back:** Mr. Ernst, it's your contention that we ought to set up a program by which communists would be urged to leave the party. They are leaving now at what rate?

**Mr. Ernst:** Well, they stay in about three years and they spend about a quarter of their time in the party trying to get out. When a man like Larry Parks admitted that he had been a sucker and a fool, and he didn't immediately get a job. This must have kept half a dozen actors in Hollywood from getting out. Why should they admit they were communists and be ruined?

See, I just don't believe that there is anything in life like sinning without repentance and salvation. And if the rest of our structure took the position of the Catholic Church we would evaporate the general membership. I have disagreed with the Catholic Church on many issues, but the Protestant and the Jewish cultures in this country are not as pronounced in their position. The Catholic Church not only says get out but says we will get you a job, and they get a job for every ex-communist.

**Mr. Back:** Mr. Lasky, do you think that is a workable idea that members can be drawn from the party that way?

**Mr. Lasky:** I think it is a workable idea in certain instances. I don't go along with Morris when he assumes that every ex-communist is looking for a job. Most of them have pretty good jobs. As a matter of fact, we discover the communists in most peculiar places, making more money than Morris and I make, but my feeling is that as long as they are ex-communists . . .

**Mr. Ernst:** Speak for yourself. I'm in upper bracket.

**Mr. Lasky:** You aint kidding.

**Mr. Back:** Mr. Lasky, you don't think that that system of withdrawing or urging withdrawing is going to solve the problem of the communists and what to do with them?

**Mr. Lasky:** Let's get one thing straight, Morris. People don't become communists because of jobs or desiring jobs. They don't spy against the United States Government, the country of their birth, because of money. If you had offered Alger Hiss money for the documents he turned over to Whit-



aker Chambers, he probably would have kicked you out of his home. These people don't do it for money. These people don't do anything for money. They do it for a perverted ideal—the perverted ideal of Marxism, Leninism, Stalinism, now Malenkovism, or whatever it is. My whole point is that you are not going to win people over, generally speaking, in a Communist party by offering them tantalizing jobs. I think this is a myth.

**Mr. Ernst:** Well, I don't want to tantalize them and I don't want to bribe them, but the fact in the United States is that our party membership has nothing to do with the party membership in Europe which has an economic base. People join here for psychological reasons. Isolated in their homes, isolated by groups, most of them are intellectuals. These are writers and ministers and teachers and actors, these are the intellectuals of America, and these people find it increasingly hard to earn a livelihood, to get a job. Now, if they are once out and we know that they have been in, what harm can it do? Are we so fearful in America that we are unwilling to let an ex-communist's book circulate anywhere in the world?

**Mr. Back:** Could you give me an example of that, Morris?

**Mr. Ernst:** I'll go further than that. On the list of McCarthy books, he has not objected to books in Europe because they contained ideas of communists. Dashiell Hammitt . . .

**Mr. Lasky:** But he's not an ex-communist.

**Mr. Ernst:** He wrote detective stories.

**Mr. Lasky:** But the point is you are ex-communist books.

**Mr. Ernst:** I have looked over

the list, and I am saying that among the names of authors and books mentioned in the McCarthy hearings there are books there that have no relationship either to the subject of communism or to the date when the man got out.

**Mr. Lasky:** But the point is, Morris, that when I looked over the list I was shocked to discover that the books of ex-communists were not purchased in large quantities. I may offer a self-serving declaration here when I say that the United States information service bought hardly any copies of *Seeds of Treason*, for example. I'm not an ex-communist, but Whitaker Chambers' book is a good example of a book that was not purchased.

There is book after book written by ex-communists which were not purchased by the United States information service, and I think that that bears investigating.

At the same time, Mr. Hammitt's book was purchased and other books by people we know. If they are not communists they have refused to deny that they are communists under oath.

**Mr. Ernst:** Well, I've got a feeling, to get back from Europe to the United States, that what we are doing now is creating a climate of fear. We are creating a climate where people are ashamed and afraid of controversy. It seems that the McCarthy approach is one where he is not willing to trust the American people. It is one where if a man has once been a communist there is no distinction made in the hearing as to when he got out. Take the list of subversive organizations used by the administration, the Truman Administration evilly, I think, and by McCarthyism. Wouldn't you imagine they would have a date af-

ter each organization as to when anybody had a right to suspect that the communists had captured it?

**Mr. Lasky:** But that predated McCarthyism. That was promulgated, that list, and this is interesting, Morris, believe me this is interesting. Mr. Francis Biddle, former attorney general, at the time he was attorney general, came out with a list of alleged subversive organizations. Mr. Biddle today is leading a campaign as leader of the Americans for Democratic Action, protesting against the very list he formulated. Now this is the great liberal.

**Mr. Ernst:** This only may mean that Biddle has changed his mind. I don't object to people changing their minds. The fact is that in the United States the Congressional committees, in asking people about the organizations on this list, have never asked, "When did you join, when was it known that the communists captured the organization?" This is a life of attainder. If you once joined, you are damned forever. I don't think this is a decent world.

**Mr. Back:** Mr. Lasky and Mr. Ernst, I want to go back and see if I can pick up the argument. As I understand it now, Mr. Ernst, you contended that if the communist who has to struggle to get out of the party to begin with could find a more acceptable climate, once he is out, the Communist party might be broken and there would be desertion in great numbers. You have taken that point of view. Mr. Lasky, you said, I think, that you agreed to some degree but you think the ex-communist is not getting a very fair shake. His books, for example, aren't being sold as well.

**Mr. Lasky:** I think that most

of the ex-communists who are doing a job for this country and testifying against the conspirators still in the party are being smeared, smeared, and smeared. I don't say that Morris is doing it; he is too decent a human being, but Morris knows of whom I speak.

**Mr. Back:** Well, then you would say that we ought to create a more favorable climate for the ex-communists?

**Mr. Lasky:** Well, I agree with Morris completely that we have to do away with the smear technique—for example once a communist, always a communist.

**Mr. Back:** We were talking about Congressional committees. I think that you said, Mr. Lasky, that if it hadn't been for Congressional committees Alger Hiss would be functioning still in high places and you said, Mr. Ernst, that the Congressional committees have failed to point out, have failed to make it easy for communists to quit. At this moment your program is not being carried out; the Congressional committees seem to be doing all the communist hunting except the FBI, so let's talk about committees for a moment. Would you talk about what would have happened to Alger Hiss if the un-American Activities Committee hadn't worked on that case?

**Mr. Ernst:** I wouldn't have the least idea. I'm glad that we have put a finger on Alger Hiss, Whitaker Chambers, Budenz, and all the rest of them. I have a feeling, however, that the FBI is the organization that we ought to leave with the problem of the saboteurs. Of the great number of people brought before the committees, very few of them are even charged with espionage or sabotage. A year and a half ago I had a re-



search group go to a library in New York City, and out of a hundred volumes of testimony of House and Senate committees less than one hundred ex-communists had testified—less than a hundred. There are 700,000.

Is this going on for 20 years? I can give McCarthy or I can get for him 100,000 names. Does he want another four million to berate and defame? To what end? What is the purpose? Does he think the public isn't aware of the danger? Aren't we really searching for a new approach, a new bit of social engineering of how to treat with an underground movement of sneaks and cowards? McCarthy hasn't got a suggestion yet as to how to deal with them.

**Mr. Back:** Thank you, Mr. Ernst.

**Mr. Lasky:** Morris, I think we ought to define our terms and look at the facts. It seems to me that McCarthy is not responsible for every investigation of communism which has been going on now for 18 years. He has been pretty busy communist hunting since 1950 and today he is not investigating communism. When he went into the Voice of America, he was investigating waste. You may disagree with his techniques, you may disagree with television. I notice now there is a cry in certain liberal circles that he uses a TV technique as a means of self prestige, gaining prestige, yet when a certain Senator from Nashville, Tennessee, came out with a TV technique, very few people cared, except a few isolated gangsters.

Now my point is this: these investigations that McCarthy is now conducting have nothing to do with the school system, have nothing to do with motion pictures, have nothing to do with Broadway, have nothing to do with radio, have

nothing to do with many things he is being blamed for or given credit for. It all depends on how you look at McCarthy. There are other committees functioning. Everybody lumps all the work of these committees into one term "McCarthyism." It's a convenient scape-goat term.

**Mr. Ernst:** If Victor's right, and he may be because I haven't read all the testimony, this is a terrible indictment on the American press. I think you will agree with me that the American press, on the McCarthy hearings on the Voice, has invariably carried the headline about some communists and not about waste and in the one instance that I know of where the testimony went to waste, a man testified about a portable automobile with some kind of equipment on it. This man wanted to change his testimony, wanted again to go before the committee, wanted to correct his testimony, and he has been denied the right to correct his testimony. I object to televising all the hearings, because I think this is no way . . .

**Mr. Lasky:** Did you object to it when Kefauver was doing it?

**Mr. Ernst:** I did, when Kefauver was doing it; I did when anybody did it. Because as between the desire of the public to be informed and the great need for a proper search for truth, I think we are in trouble in getting an informed public. The truth is distorted by the drama of television.

**Mr. Lasky:** I accept that.

**Mr. Back:** Gentlemen, you are leaving a little void that I want to walk into now. Mr. Ernst, I think, has stated his program. He thinks that communists can be enticed to leave the party in such a degree that the party might be

reduced to its hard core of eight or nine thousand people. Mr. Lasky, to a degree, tonight you have agreed. Now what sort of a program would you suggest, to get the communists out of the Communist party and eliminate the menace?

**Mr. Lasky:** I have a program which involves outlawing the Communist party, and I know Morris is opposed to that, he will tell me that J. Edgar Hoover opposes that, but my program is simple. It is simply based on this—that the Communist party is already underground. J. Edgar Hoover, the other day, said that the communists are making it pretty tough for the FBI; they are meeting out in the parks; they don't meet in rooms where you can take the conversations; they meet in automobiles. They ride around New York or San Francisco and they talk in automobiles. They are underground; let's not kid ourselves.

They may make work tougher for FBI agents if we put the communist press out of business. It may make it tougher if the *Daily Worker* goes out of business because the *Daily Worker* gives us the list of comrades and the list of fellow-travelers and so on. This is a pretty extreme measure, I agree, but this is the enemy and we've got to recognize the enemy. We put the Nazi Bund out of business in 1941 and I did not hear any shrieks from anyone of consequence that we were destroying our liberties.

**Mr. Back:** Mr. Ernst, do you want to comment on the idea of outlawing the party?

**Mr. Ernst:** I don't think in order to lick communism we ought to stoop to the level of communism. I'm not afraid for

America if you had the Communist party on the ballot. I'd bring it out into the open as far as possible. Moreover, pragmatically, you can't outlaw them; all you can do is outlaw the name. They have changed their name a couple of times already. And if the Supreme Court decision finally holds that the Communist party must register, they won't register; they will just come up under another name. What are we afraid of in great America? What better than have them on the ballot and find out how many . . .

**Mr. Lasky:** I'm not worried about the comrades who will run for office. We know them. I'm worried about the comrades who steal atomic secrets. I'm worried about the comrades, the so-called beau-seeking girls—beau-seeking girls who work in the Justice Department and steal confidential documents. I'm worried about the spies, the traitors, the people, and I want to get this across—I am not one of these guys who says that every liberal is a communist, every liberal is a potential spy. I don't believe that, but I do say there are spies, and J. Edgar Hoover says today there are spies and we've got to be more careful of them than ever before.

**Mr. Back:** Mr. Lasky, I think Mr. Ernst has said that the FBI should take care of these, and I think he has raised the question of whether Congressional committees do get at these people that you have just said you feared so much. Do you want to talk about that for a moment?

**Mr. Lasky:** Well, the FBI is, of course, one of the greatest police organizations in the world. But it's not a superman organization and what amuses me most about the statement, let the FBI do it—

and Mr. Morris Ernst is not included in this charge—the people who say let the FBI do it, the very next day start attacking the FBI. It's very amusing to me. The liberals who always say, "To heck with the committees; committees are no good; they don't do the job; let the FBI do it," are the next day promoting a book attacking the FBI.

**Mr. Ernst:** I've been a devoted supporter of Edgar Hoover of the FBI.

**Mr. Lasky:** I know that, Morris.

**Mr. Ernst:** I started with great suspicion, as Americans should be suspicious of all policemen, and I have come out with great admiration. I should think if we stopped all these hearings for a few months and saw what happened to the climate of America, and the Legion and other great groups would be offering to get jobs for communists, you would see things change in America. I've gotten jobs for 50 ex-communists; I'll get more jobs for ex-communists.

**Mr. Lasky:** Morris, so has the American Legion.

**Mr. Ernst:** In non-sensitive areas, but this you can only do in Amer-

ica in this climate—in factories, in industry, whereas most of the membership are intellectuals.

**Mr. Back:** Before we turn to the questions from the audience, and there are many tonight, Mr. Lasky, just one matter I would like to turn over to you. I am startled at the idea that the NAM, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion, the CIO and the AF of L might get together and organize an employment bureau for ex-communists to make it easier for communists to leave the party. Do you want to comment on that?

**Mr. Lasky:** Well, of course, if you help communists out, of course you can do it. There is no system where the NAM and the AF of L can't get together on any project. They do get together on many community projects, and I think this would be a very important community project. I think Morris and I ought to get together tomorrow and try to get the NAM and the AF of L together.

**Mr. Back:** We'll be waiting for the results of that get together tomorrow. Now let's continue with the matters at hand tonight. A young lady has a question, I think, Mr. Ernst.



## QUESTIONS, PLEASE!

**Questioner:** I would like to ask Mr. Ernst what makes a man like Alger Hiss join the Communist party, a man of his brilliant education? Usually you think of a communist as a man or woman in the lower-income bracket.

**Mr. Ernst:** I don't know why Alger Hiss joined, but I interviewed 300 people, good many of them like Alger Hiss. In the book

you've got their stories, not ours. These are intellectuals, often of divorced homes, with trouble in the home, and this is an ideological, psychological movement in America. There are practically, as I said before, no poor people. This is something happening in the person and the most distressing thing in America is that in all the hearings of the Congressional com-



mittees practically none of this has been brought out to the American public, and we still think that a communist is a revolutionist with a big beard and dynamite in his pocket.

*Mr. Lasky:* I wonder about that really, because when a man like Frederick Vanderbilt Field, and Dashiell Hammitt, and people of that stature, particularly Field who is one of the wealthiest human beings in America, act like communists, refuse to deny that they are communists, and *are* communists, it seems to me that the public is beginning to realize that the communist is not someone who has a bomb in his pocket and has a beard. He might be your next door neighbor.

*Questioner:* Mr. Lasky, are there any similarities between the present-day investigations of communism and the colonial witch hunts in old Salem town?

*Mr. Lasky:* Well, the only difference between the colonial witch hunts in old Salem and the present-day investigations is that there are witches today. There weren't any then.

*Mr. Back:* Mr. Ernst, do you want to comment on that?

*Mr. Ernst:* No.

*Questioner:* Mr. Ernst, in 1949, eleven of the communist leaders were tried and convicted and placed in jail. Do you believe that this weakened the Communist party?

*Mr. Ernst:* Yes, I think the conviction of probably 50 of the communist leaders has weakened the party.

*Questioner:* Mr. Lasky, can one be a communist without being a Russian agent, either consciously or unconsciously?

*Mr. Lasky:* Well, of course when we say the hard core, we mean the people who are either actual or potential saboteurs, spies, and so on. But there are vast numbers of communists who probably would break away from the party if they were asked to do espionage work and so forth, who actually believe that they are acting in the best interests of the United States or in the best interest of the people in their community. They might get involved in, say, a housing project of some sort, a fight for public housing. They don't realize that essentially what the party wants to use them for is pro-Soviet work.

*Mr. Ernst:* May I add just a word? I agree with Victor. I think you would find if the Congressional committees would really conduct an investigation, that the type of young people who join today, and they are still joining . .

*Mr. Back:* Are they joining in great numbers, did you say?

*Mr. Ernst:* I think they are joining in considerable numbers today. The parents of kids who have joined have consulted me. These are people if they join at all in this climate I should imagine are more susceptible to being used for sabotage than in the days when there was friendship with Russia; when Russia was an ally. Moreover, a lot of people join and get therapeutic value out of it, ministers' sons who for the first time did something. They folded envelopes, they went on picket lines, they were asked to do something. There you are getting a very different membership.

*Mr. Lasky:* One thing I would like to say that out in Hollywood where I spent a little time there was a psychiatrist who did a very good business with people who

wanted to leave the Communist party. He didn't do it for money particularly, but he did it because he understood the political nature of the party and the problem. Not every psychiatrist, by the way, Morris, despite your statement that psychiatrists ought to be put on Congressional committees, not every psychiatrist is equipped politically to do this job. But out in Hollywood where the communists were pretty militant this psychiatrist did a land-office business.

*Mr. Back:* We'll go back to the question now.

*Questioner:* In trying to wipe out the communists by the McCarthy method, are we not incurring the greater danger of crushing American freedom?

*Mr. Ernst:* Sure.

*Questioner:* Mr. Ernst, what is the real meaning of the term "Communism"?

*Mr. Back:* This is it, Mr. Lasky.

*Mr. Lasky:* What is the real meaning of the term "Communism"? Well, maybe you ought to read Morris's book here. That's a pretty good book. When we say communist, we don't mean someone who has radical beliefs. I think Morris and I are agreed that in this country we can stand all kinds of opinions, and I don't care how crackpot they may be. The fact of the matter is that when we say communist we mean a man who is dedicated to promoting the foreign policy—not even the ideal, but the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. They aid the Soviet Union. It's not an internationalist movement. It's a nationalist movement—the nationalism being Soviet nationalism.

*Mr. Ernst:* I agree with that, and I think I would merely add that tonight we both meant that it

was a member of the party or under its discipline.

*Questioner:* Mr. Ernst, why should a person who joined the Communist party several years ago, and has since resigned, be persecuted and lose his job as a professor?

*Mr. Ernst:* As a professor? I wouldn't discharge him. I wouldn't have a communist teach my children because he's got a disciplined mind owing allegiance to a foreign government. But if a man is out of the movement, I would then test him by the performance in the classroom. Otherwise people are damned inevitably and forever, unless you are going to have a certain date and say you must be out seven and one-half years. I just want to get them out and then if they are out and they say, "Yes, I was once a member of that horrible movement," we can watch them, and they are less danger than the people who are still in and deny they're in.

*Mr. Lasky:* Morris, I don't know of any cases where people who have confessed membership in a Communist party have been fired from the schools. I know of several cases of people appearing before Congressional committees who have retained their jobs. I think this is a generalization which is based on facts.

*Mr. Ernst:* I think it is true. I have talked to about 100 people who pleaded the fifth amendment, and that's a different subject, but in the main the plea is made that they don't want to tell anything for fear if they say they were once a member they are ruined forever.

*Questioner:* Mr. Lasky, since the American communists are dedicated to the service of a foreign power, do you think their citizenship should be revoked once they

are ferreted out and proven to be communists?

*Mr. Lasky:* Well, that's a question which I think is being answered in the Immigration Department right now. I personally believe that in the case of an alien who is a member of the Communist party all efforts should be made to strip him of his citizenship.

*Mr. Back:* Well, suppose he is not an alien, he's a citizen.

*Mr. Ernst:* I wouldn't take away the citizenship out of fright or fear in this great nation from anybody unless he had become naturalized as a citizen by fraud.

*Mr. Back:* Thank you, Mr. Ernst. I wanted to put in a note here. Due to the change in tonight's subject, we were unable to use the selected question submitted by a listener for the previously announced topic on big business. However, we are holding all questions received for this week's broadcast until this topic is rescheduled at a later date. To the listener who submits the most appropriate question each week for our speakers, as you know, we send a set of the American People's Encyclopedia. And now we go to this lady here.

*Questioner:* Mr. Ernst, how can we teach our children the pitfalls of communism if many teachers are afraid to touch the subject of communism in their teaching?

*Mr. Ernst:* That is a very good question. I hope Vic agrees with me. I would give courses in high schools and colleges on communism. In colleges, I would have avowed communists give lectures. I've got faith that truth wins out. I would like nothing better than

to have Earl Browder or William Foster give a lecture on his defense of communism in this hall. You would laugh him out of existence.

*Mr. Back:* Mr. Lasky, Mr. Ernst wondered if you would agree with him.

*Mr. Lasky:* Well, I agree with him up to a point. My feeling is, of course, that we should teach communism. We should teach the kids all about communism, all about Nazism, all about any particular governmental system. I think it is nonsense to say that because we are trying to expose communism in Washington we shouldn't teach what it really is in the schools. I think that we are teaching it in large measure. If there is fear it is self-imposed fear in the academic world.

*Mr. Back:* Should Mr. Browder be allowed to address an audience?

*Mr. Lasky:* It all depends. My own feeling is that I wouldn't want a procurer to teach a class in sociology up at Harvard on the subject of prostitution. This gets ridiculous. There are plenty of ex-communists who might get the jobs who could teach the subject of communism.

*Mr. Back:* Gentlemen, I'm sorry that I have to conclude the questioning at this point because of time. Thank you very much, Mr. Morris L. Ernst and Mr. Victor Lasky, for your discussion and thanks to this fine audience for your questions. On behalf of Town Hall, we wish to express our appreciation to Louis Auerbacher, President of the Friends of the Orange Public Library, Mrs. Sherman L. Black, its Membership Chairman, and Mr. Donald M. Smith, Jr., the Ticket Chairman.



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### THE SPEAKERS' COLUMN

(Continued from page 2)

assigned to the *Sun's* New York Bureau. In 1942 Mr. Lasky entered the Army, and saw duty with the military police, the OSS, Psychological Warfare and *The Stars and Stripes*. Following V-E Day, he joined the staff of the *Paris Post*, an English-language newspaper published in the French capital. He returned to Chicago in 1946, and the following year went back to New York to write for the *World-Telegram*. Among his assignments for the Scripps-Howard paper was the "treason beat," and he became known as an expert on subversive movements. In mid-1948 he was assigned to the Hiss case and covered the story from the moment it broke in Washington to the sentencing of Alger Hiss. Later, with Ralph de Toledano of *Newsweek*, Mr. Lasky wrote the best-selling account of the Hiss case, *Seeds of Treason*.



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